

# NETAFIM DRIP IRRIGATION SUCCESS STORY

## PROCESSING TOMATOES

### DRIP PRODUCES A MORE UNIFORM PROCESSING TOMATO CROP WITH LESS MOLD WHILE SAVING WATER

Bob Payne grows processing tomatoes near Woodland, CA and after four years of drought has a greater appreciation for the 15-year-old drip system that provides all of his irrigation needs.

"I've been very happy with drip," he says. "It was especially nice to know that going into this drought we already had 100 percent of our tomatoes on drip."

Using drip, Payne said, allows him to use about 40 percent less water than flooding them. "We've increased yields and you grow a stronger plant when you don't stress them with water," he adds about the benefits he's reaped from using drip.

His drip system, installed on the 80-inch tomato beds, includes Netafim single line dripline with emitters spaced approximately 14 inches apart and buried about 11 inches deep. The amount of water dispersed, Payne said, in a given time period fluctuates slightly depending on the run length of the beds. "We like to run six-hour sets and how often we run water depends on the growth stage of the plant," he says.

"We've tried different soil moisture monitors, but we have found that boots in the field are better," he explains, adding they field check when the tomatoes need water, which also gives them an opportunity to scout for any leaks. "Early on we don't need to put on as much water but later, as the plants are putting on fruit, then we put on more water," Payne said.

The farm also grows sunflowers for seed and garbanzo beans in an every-other-year rotation on the tomato beds. Payne says these crops similarly respond well to being grown on drip.

Besides the designated amount of processing tomatoes being grown each year, he said, the rest of the entire farm is on drip irrigation. "We're saving about 20 percent on our labor costs using drip," Payne said, adding, some fields are more prone to gopher activity so he still has labor costs associated with fixing leaks.

While labor savings are modest, he says equipment savings are much more significant. "Our tractor costs have definitely come down," Payne said. "We're not making as many passes across the field and we're not opening and closing ditches all the time."



**WITH DRIP:**  
**40%**  
**WATER SAVINGS**  
**20%**  
**LABOR SAVINGS**

Besides saving on machinery costs, he says drip allows him the ability to do timely applications. "When you need to get in to spray, you don't need to worry about being in the middle of a flooded field and have to wait 7 to 10 days to have it dry out to be able to get back on it," Payne said. "With drip we can react when we have problems."

He also uses the driplines to fertilize or add other inputs to get the material directly to where the tomatoes need it. He explains that with drip they are actually using more fertilizer due to growing bigger plants and a better crop.

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"We're able to put all of our fertilizer through the drip and spoon feed the plants instead of giving them big slugs like we used to when we had to apply fertilizer with tractors," he said.

Some of Payne's other cultural practices and tools include obtaining a pre-plant soil analysis to create a plan on how they will fertilize each field. He also uses tissue analysis throughout the season to ensure that the crop is getting the necessary nutrients to grow to its full potential.

Besides the benefits Payne can attest to growing processing tomatoes on drip, he says other industry associates comment on the productive attributes of the crop being grown on drip.

"From what the canneries say, a more uniform crop comes in from drip fields than what is grown on furrow-irrigated fields," Payne says. "Typically you'll also see less mold than what is grown on a furrow-flood field."

Payne encourages growers who still use furrow or flood irrigation to consider adding drip to their operation.

"Drip is a great way to utilize the limited amount of water we have and it promotes a healthier plant," he says. "It's just a great culture over flood or furrow irrigation and I've been really happy with Netafim for standing behind everything I've installed."



## KEY BENEFITS

- ✓ HIGHER YIELDS
- ✓ STRONGER PLANTS
- ✓ USES LESS WATER
- ✓ LESS PLANT STRESS
- ✓ LOWER LABOR COSTS
- ✓ LOWER EQUIPMENT COSTS



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